

Ayr Mount (Kirkland Place)
Saint Mary's Road
HillsBorough Vicinity
Orange County
North Carolina

HABS No. - NC-220

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

AYR MOUNT
(KIRKLAND PLACE)

HABS No. NC-220

Address - St. Mary's Road, Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina (0.9 mi. east on St. Mary's Road, right 0.3 mi.)

Present Owner - Mr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Kirkland
Ayr Mount
Hillsborough, North Carolina

Present Occupant - Mr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Kirkland
Ayr Mount
Hillsborough, North Carolina

Present Use - Private home

Brief Statement of Significance - Architecturally this splendid brick manor house is the finest house in the Hillsborough area and one of the finest early houses in North Carolina. Its solid brick construction, superlative woodwork, and lavish floor plan make it notable. There have been no changes at Ayr Mount, and Kirklands still live there (in 1964) over 160 years after William Kirkland built the house.

The early Kirklands were Scottish merchants who were people of substance and eminence in the community. Anne Kirkland married Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin, and the Kirklands of Ayr Mount are allied in many ways with numerous old families of North Carolina.

Date of Erection - Probably between 1790 and 1792.

Architect - Unknown. Ayr Mount's similarity to near-by Fairntosh has been frequently pointed out.

Builder, Suppliers, etc. - William Kirkland built Ayr Mount. In all probability he used Negro workmen. According to a letter written in 1792 to his sister Elizabeth in Ayr, Scotland, he used the red clay dug from his great basement for the bricks of Ayr Mount, and he used wood from trees cut on the site for his panelling. The present Mr. Samuel S. Kirkland has found a piece of wood in the attic with the bark still clinging to it and panelling designs marked on it. The present owner, Mr. Samuel S. Kirkland, believes that he can locate the site of William Kirkland's brick kiln.

Original Plan, Construction, etc. - Ayr Mount has a high central block with flanking right-angle wings. Its original floor plan is unchanged today. It has a 40' lateral hall with a room 25' square in each of the wings and another 25' square directly behind the lateral hall. (There are five such spacious rooms, all with ceilings 13 1/2' high.) The rooms, stair halls, and stair case have fine double panelling, fine ceiling moldings, and handsome carved mantels and overmantels. Ayr Mount has its original shutters and original hardware.

All walls are of solid brick. There is a fine modillion cornice on the outside of the house.

Physical History:

Original and Subsequent Owners:

1. February 19, 1760 (Land Grant in N. C. Land Office, Raleigh, N. C.) - Grant of 560 acres from Earl Granville to Thomas Wiley, described as follows: "560 acres of land in Orange County on the No. side of Ence River and on both sides of the Trading Path, adjoining the lines of Colonel Corbin, William Reed, and Thomas Wiley's two tracts of land; Beginning at a spanish oak by the said river on Colonel Corbin's line; running thence along his line No. 38 Chs. to a white oak; then east 3 chms. to a black gum, Wm. Reed's corner; so along his line No. 20 chains to a red oak, his other corner in Thos. Wiley's line; so along his line So. 17 Chns. to a white oak, his corner; so along his line E. 24 Chns. to the said river); so up the various courses of the river to the first station."
2. (February 28, 1763) See DB 3, 456. (Deed missing but subsequent deed refers to it; see below.) - Thomas Wylie and James Espy sell the west 200 acres of the 560-acre grant to William Few, Sr...."granted to the sd. William Few, Sen'r. by Thomas Wylie and James Espy by deed bearing date February 28, 1763." (This 200-acre tract is the tract later known as the Ayr Mount Tract.)
Note: William Few, Sr. had on January 15, 1758, purchased another tract of 640 acres (to the east of the Ayr Mount Tract) from James Taylor and had in the fall of 1758 moved his family from that part of Baltimore County, Maryland, which later became Hartford County, to his new home on the western side of the Ence. He also built a water grist mill and a saw mill in partnership with his brother James Few. Presumably he removed to the Ayr Mount Tract shortly after its purchase in 1763. There may already have been a house and outbuildings there, since the junction of the Old Halifax Road and the Trading Path made it a choice location. See F. Nash, Hillsboro Colonial and Revolutionary, Appendix C.)
3. October, 1768. C. J. Sauthier's Map of Hillsborough and its environs clearly shows the Few farmstead to the east of the town with a sizeable, squarish dwelling-house (Few's Tavern) set almost flush with the Old Halifax Road (where it joins the Trading Path), two barns, and two hedge-enclosed fields. Tradition says that William Kirkland lived in the Tavern while he was building Ayr Mount. Foundations, evidently of the Tavern, have recently been partially excavated at Ayr Mount.
Note: Various details about this farmstead may be learned from the Autobiography of William Few (published in the Magazine of American History, 1881). James Few, second son of William Few, Sr., was captured at the Battle of Alamance and hanged shortly thereafter. The Few family removed to Georgia.
4. April 22, 1770 (DB 3, 215-216) - William Few, Sr., conveyed this 200-acre tract of land to John Butler, Planter, and Sheriff of Orange County for 100 pounds Proc. money..."a certain Tract of Land and Plantation... on the North side of Ence River and on both sides of the Main Road containing by Estimation Two hundred acres...together with all houses and every other appurtenance."

5. July 23, 1771 (DB 3, 456) - John Butler, Planter, one year later conveyed the 200-acre tract to Ralph MacNair (also spelled Mainer) for 100 pounds....."it being a tract of land granted to the sd. John Butler Apr. 22, 1770, from William Few, Sr., and granted to the sd. Wm. Few, Sr., by Thomas Wylie and James Espy, Feb. 28, 1763.
Note: MacNair, a Hillsborough merchant and Tory, also bought one other tract from Archibald Borland on the same date, and a third tract from Alexander Borland on Dec. 14, 1776, bringing the total acreage to 824 acres. MacNair kept the tract for six years during which time he built a stone dam across the Eno, the remnants of which were still known in 1908 as "MacNair's Old Stone Dam."
6. June 24, 1777 (See DB 2, 236-237) - Ralph MacNair sold the 824 acre tract to John Kinchen, attorney.
7. July 19, 1780 (DB 2, 236-237) - John Kinchen sold the 824 acre tract to the Quaker William Courtney for 1200 pounds..."being the several tracts which Ralph Mainer late of this state purchased by deeds of Bargain and Sale from John Butler and Archibald Borland and Alexander Borland.."
8. N. d. (probably before 1790 or about 1790) - William Courtney, Sr. may have sold it or the Ayr Mount tract may have been offered for sale to William Kirkland by the heirs of Courtney. William Courtney, Sr., died intestate and his 824-acre tract was divided into smaller tracts: Tract No. 2 was sold by Joseph Courtney on Nov. 30, 1799, to William Kirkland (DB 8, 297); Tract No. 3 (the present Montrose, was finally acquired by John Whitted; and Tract No. ? was "William Kirkland's tract, formerly the property of William Courtney, Sr." This seems without any doubt to be the Ayr Mount Tract. No deed from Courtney to Kirkland exists in the Register of Deed's office, Orange County.
9. William Kirkland's Letter of 1792 to his sister Elizabeth in Ayr. Scotland --- This letter (it must have been a copy or draft of the original) was found some years ago by the late J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, Curator of the Southern Historical Collection, UNC, among the Cameron Papers at Fairtosh. The letter is not known to be found in the Southern Historical Collection, but its contents are quoted by Prof. Archibald Henderson, Old Houses and Gardens of North Carolina (1939), Plate 54: William K Kirkland writes in 1792 that his new house is nearing completion, that he has found the clay dug from his basement suitable for making bricks, and that he is planting shrubbery around his new home.
Note: Francis Nash estimates that Kirkland came to Hillsborough in 1790; he married Margaret Scott on Christmas Eve, 1792; and he was an established merchant in 1794 (receipts of that year in the Southern Historical Collection are signed "Wil. Kirkland & Co.") Thus, he may well have bought the Ayr Mount tract from William Courtney, Sr., in the 1780's, and Mr. Nash's estimate of his arrival in 1790 may be inaccurate.

10. Will of William Kirkland (Will Book E, 388-391), dated Oct. 16, 1829, proved 1836). Devises entire estate of every kind to son John U. Kirkland and son-in-law Thomas Ruffin (trustee and Executor of will). Extremely long, complicated, and ambiguous will stipulates that after payment of many debts of various kinds, remaining estate is to go to wife Margaret (Scott) Kirkland, and after her death everything is to be sold and divided into 5 equal parts for his children, Alexander, Susan, Mary, and Phebe, and 5th part is to be put in trust for his daughter Martha. Explains that he is not providing for younger children.
Note: The terms of this will were still operative in 1883.
11. John Umstead Kirkland ((b. March 20, 1802 - d. Jan 25, 1879; m. Elizabeth Simpson) evidently either bought Ayr Mount under the terms of his father's will or acquired it during the settlement of the estate, for he lived there continuously until his death in 1879. It is possible that John U. Kirkland's father-in-law, Samuel Simpson, purchased Ayr Mount for him or that he advanced the money for it (see below).

John U. Kirkland sold the west 56 acres on Nov, 22, 1842, to William A. Graham (DB 30, 115) to become the estate of Montrose.
12. John U. Kirkland died intestate Jan. 25, 1879, and the estate descended to his widow Elizabeth A. (Simpson) Kirkland.
13. Will of Elizabeth A. (Simpson) Kirkland (Will Book H, 307-308), Dec. 28, 1881.
"The widow of John U. Kirkland acting under the power given me in the will of my late Father Samuel-Simpson of New Bern." Devises sum of money to daughters Susan Margaret and Margaret Jane to Maria (Mrs. Clinton Crow), to Samuel S. Kirkland, and \$2000 in trust to Samuel S. Kirkland for her daughter-in-law Mrs. Hattie McLaren Kirkland, as widow of John U. Kirkland, Jr.; the residue of the estate is to go to sons William and Alexander and to several grandchildren. Son Samuel S. Kirkland is executor of the estate.
14. July 16, 1883 (DB 49, 469-470) - Augustus W. Graham, administrator, "with the will annexed of William Kirkland of the County of Orange" sells to Samuel S. Kirkland, trustee for Mrs. Hattie (McLaren) Kirkland and her children in the County of Orange a 360 acre tract "known as Kirkland Home Tract" and including Ayr Mount for \$1254.00.
15. Sept. 14, 1893 (DB 53, 411) - Negotiations were begun for the sale of the Hundred Acre Field to Julian S. Carr. See also Sept. 19, 1893 (DB 53, 412; A. M. Leathers' Plat of the Hundred Acre Field, surveyed Sept. 15, 1893, is included in DB 53, 413.
16. Dec. 12, 1894 (DB 54, 17-18) - Mrs. Hattie Kirkland and her children by her Trustee Samuel S. Kirkland of Spartanburg Co., S. C. sell the Hundred Acre Field to Julian S. Carr for \$600. "Described in Survey of George W. Tate, Dec., 8, 1894"... "and the proceeds of sale used in the tract of said Hattie Kirkland and her children in the improvement of land and necessary repairs thereof the Dwelling House."

Important Old Views: Watercolor of Ayr Mount (shows porch); hangs in the hall at Ayr
(Location) Mount.

Sources of Information: (1) Deeds Books and Will Books of Orange County Register
(Location) of Deeds Office, Orange County Courthouse, Hillsborough,
N. C.; (2) Records of the N. C. Land Office, Raleigh, N. C.;
(3) Interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Kirkland, present owners of Ayr
Mount; (4) Francis Nash, Hillsboro, Colonial and Revolutionary, Appendix C
(Raleigh, 1903); (5) C. J. Sauthier's October, 1768 Map of Hillsborough (showing
the Few homestead to the east-the site of Ayr Mount); (6) Frances Benjamin
Johnson and Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Early Architecture of North Carolina
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941, 1947), p.41 (Ayr Mount
described); and p. 139 (Ayr Mount illustrated); (7) Auchibald Henderson and
Bayard Wootten, Old Houses and Gardens of North Carolina (Chapel Hill:
University of North Carolina Press, 1939), Plates 54 and 56 with description
and historical background of Ayr Mount; (8) information and research concerning
William Few's water grist mill and a saw mill from Hugh Conway Browning.